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Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East

Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. By paragraph 10 of its resolution 72/24 on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to pursue consultations with the States of the region and other concerned States, in accordance with paragraph 7 of its resolution 46/30. Taking into account the evolving situation in the region, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to seek from those States their views on the measures outlined in chapters III and IV of the study annexed to the report of the Secretary-General of 10 October 1990 (A/45/435) or other relevant measures, in order to move towards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East. By paragraph 11 of the resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit, at the seventy-third session, a report on the implementation of the resolution. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request.

2. On 6 February 2018, the Office for Disarmament Affairs sent a note verbale to all Member States drawing their attention to those paragraphs of the resolution and seeking their views on the matter. Any views received after 15 May 2018 will be posted on the website of the Office (www.un.org/disarmament/) in the language of submission. No addenda will be issued.

3. Replies were received from the Governments of Cuba, Ecuador, Madagascar, Mexico, Morocco, Qatar, the Russian Federation, the Syrian Arab Republic and Ukraine and are reproduced in section III of the present report. A reply received from the European Union is reproduced in section IV, in accordance with the modalities set out in General Assembly resolution 65/276.

II. Observations

4. At the sixty-first regular session of the General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency, in September 2017, Arab States members of the International Atomic Energy Agency reiterated a previous request for the inclusion of an agenda item entitled "Israeli nuclear capabilities". However, for the second year running, those same States opted not to reintroduce a resolution under that item and expressed the hope that, in the light of the decision, their efforts to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East would be viewed favourably at the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. Israel expressed regret that the agenda item had been included and called upon the Arab Group to refrain from including the item at future sessions of the General Conference.

5. At the meetings of the First Committee during the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, in October 2017, States continued to demonstrate support for the convening of a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of maonss destruction. While many States criticized the lack of progress towards such a zone, no new ideas were put forward and the two annual resolutions introduced by Egypt on the Middle East included only technical updates. The Russian Federation delivered a statement in which it expressed concern at the lack of progress in convening a conference on such a zone and the negative impact that that could have on the 2020 Review Conference. The Russian Federation referred to a working paper submitted at the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference, held in Vienna from 2 to 12 May 2017, containing specific ideas regarding arrangements for further work (NPT/CONF.2020/PC.I/WP.31) and to its intention to conduct intensive consultations during the seventy-second session of the Assembly with the countries of the region

on possible steps aimed at, among other things, unblocking the preparatory work and holding the conference. The Russian Federation mentioned that the proposal remained on the table until needed by the Middle East States. The United States of America reiterated its support for the goal of a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction and its preparedness to support direct regional dialogue.

6. During the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference, held in Geneva from 23 April to 4 May 2018, the importance of establishing further nuclear-weapon-free zones where they did not exist, especially in the Middle East, was endorsed.

7. States parties reaffirmed their support for the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and recalled the affirmation of its goals and objectives by the 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences. States parties recalled their resolve to undertake, individually and collectively, all measures necessary for its prompt implementation. States parties reaffirmed their support for convening a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.

8. Four working papers on the issue were submitted in the framework of the second session of the Preparatory Committee. The Group of Non-Aligned States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapon, in their working paper (NPT/CONF.2020/PC.II/WP.16), called upon the Secretary-General to accelerate his efforts to ensure the convening, without any further delay, of a successful conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction. The Islamic Republic of Iran, in its working paper (NPT/CONF.2020/PC.II/WP.31), invited the 2020 Review Conference to establish a subsidiary body under its Main Committee II to consider the urgent implementation of the 1995 resolution and the 2010 plan of action on the Middle East and, building upon past experience, agree on concrete steps for their speedy implementation. It also proposed elements for inclusion in the final document of the 2020 Review Conference. The United States submitted a working paper (NPT/CONF.2020/PC.II/WP.33) with practical steps to establish the conditions for a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction. The Group of Arab States delivered a joint statement and issued a working paper (NPT/CONF.2020/PC.II/WP.34) reaffirming its resolve to make every effort to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East region, with a view to enhancing the potential for achieving peace, security and stability. In addition, during the second session of the Preparatory Committee, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland stated that it remained convinced that an initial conference, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by all States in the region, as set out in the 2010 Review Conference action plan, was a worthwhile, valid and achievable goal.

9. Recalling that the 1995 resolution on Middle East contains a call for the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction, the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations have, since the submission of the previous report of the Secretary-General (A/72/340 (Part I)), continued their joint work towards the full destruction of the declared chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic. This work contributes to, among other things, the realization of such a zone. Continued engagement between the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and OPCW is necessary to resolve all outstanding issues relating to the Syrian declaration under the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (Chemical Weapons Convention).

10. Reports of use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic are deeply disturbing, in particular the confirmation by the OPCW fact finding mission in the Syrian Arab Republic of the use of chemical weapons on three occasions in Lataminah in March 2017 and once in Saraqib in February 2018. Against that backdrop, the non-renewal of the mandate of the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism is deeply regrettable, given that it left the international community with no dedicated mechanism for attributing responsibility for the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic. In that connection, the Conference of the States Parties decided, on 27 June 2018, at its fourth special session, that the OPCW secretariat would put into place arrangements to identify the perpetrators of the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic by identifying and reporting on all information potentially relevant to the origin of those weapons, where the OPCW fact-finding mission determined, or had determined, that use or likely use had occurred.

11. As mentioned in the disarmament agenda of the Secretary-General, entitled "Securing our common future", launched on 24 May 2018 in Geneva, the Secretary-General and the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs will work with Member States to strengthen and consolidate nuclear-weapon-free zones, including by facilitating enhanced cooperation and consultation between existing zones, encouraging nuclear-weapon States to adhere to the relevant protocols to the treaties establishing such zones and supporting the further establishment of such zones, including in the Middle East.

12. The creation of stable security conditions and an eventual Middle East peace settlement would contribute to the process of establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East. In that connection, all parties concerned, inside and outside the region, should seek to create such conditions. Furthermore, the United Nations continues to be ready to provide any assistance in that regard. In that context, the continued lack of prospects for a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the growing impediments to the realization of the two-State solution are deeply concerning. The recent tensions in Gaza are a gruesome reminder of how fragile the situation is and how the world cannot afford another fallout from this conflict. The two-State solution is the only realistic way to achieve an end to the conflict, an end to the occupation that began in 1967, a resolution of all final status issues, including Jerusalem, borders, refugees and security, and the establishment of a sovereign, independent, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace with a secure State of Israel, in accordance with relevant resolutions of the Security Council, previous agreements, the Madrid principles and the Quartet road map. The Secretary-General reaffirms his strong commitment to reaching a lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

III. Replies received from Governments

Cuba

[Original: Spanish]
[11 May 2018]

Deeply concerned at the threat to humanity posed by the existence of nuclear weapons and the possible use or threat of use of such weapons, Cuba commends the efforts made to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in all regions of the world because they contribute towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Cuba forms part of the first densely populated area in the world to be declared a nuclear-weapon-free zone, through the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (Treaty of Tlatelolco), which has been

a political, legal and institutional benchmark for the establishment of other nuclear-weapon-free zones in different regions of the world.

Latin America and the Caribbean have also made a significant contribution to nuclear disarmament and to the maintenance of international peace and security, as the first region formally proclaimed a Zone of Peace, at the Second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, held in Havana in January 2014.

Despite calls from the international community and the many resolutions and decisions adopted by the General Assembly and the International Atomic Energy Agency, it has not been possible to establish a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

We firmly believe that the establishment of such a zone would contribute significantly to the achievement of the goal of nuclear disarmament and would also constitute a major step forward in the peace process in the Middle East region.

The failure, in 2012 and in subsequent years, to hold a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, in accordance with the 1995, 2000 and 2005 Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, seriously undermines the credibility of the Treaty. We stress that the 2020 Review Conference should focus on complying with the agreement reached in order to avoid a negative impact on the credibility of the Treaty and the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime as a whole.

Cuba reiterates its firm commitment to achieving a widespread and lasting peace in the Middle East and calls for an international conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction to be convened without further delay and without preconditions.

Ecuador

[Original: Spanish]
[15 May 2018]

In accordance with its commitment to peace and in line with article 415 of its Constitution, Ecuador calls for the peaceful resolution of disputes and rejects any kind of threat or use of force to resolve them. It also condemns the development of weapons of mass destruction. In that context, it was one of the five Latin American countries that signed the 1963 declaration that led to the negotiation of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, which established the first densely populated nuclear-weapon-free zone in the world.

Ecuador has welcomed the establishment of other nuclear-weapon-free zones around the world (Africa, South Pacific, South-East Asia, Central Asia and Mongolia) because it believes that, as more territories are declared free of nuclear weapons, there will be enhanced awareness of the illegality of the use of these weapons, which will make a tangible contribution to building a safer world. As a result, it regrets the failure to convene a conference on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, which was agreed upon at the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and encourages the Secretary-General to increase efforts so that a conference can be convened as soon as possible.

Mexico

[Original: Spanish]
[2 May 2018]

As the main driver of the first nuclear-weapon-free zone to be established in a densely populated area, Mexico supports the creation of such zones as an effective nuclear non-proliferation measure. This, of course, is subject to explicit agreements consistent with international law between the parties concerned.

For Mexico, nuclear-weapon-free zones have contributed to the process of nuclear non-proliferation, as long as participating States undertake not to develop, acquire or use nuclear weapons and to prevent the deployment in their respective territories of such weapons belonging to other States. Ultimately, for Mexico, militarily denuclearized zones are not an end in themselves but an intermediate step towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Mexico supports efforts aimed at the establishment of new nuclear-weapon-free zones. In the case of the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, Mexico has supported the efforts of the international community in this regard in the General Assembly and considers that its promotion is a key component of the commitments behind the 1995 agreement on the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the agreements reached at the 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, since it would help to defuse tensions and create a climate of peace and security in that region, thus contributing to the goal of the total elimination of nuclear weapons there.

Mexico regrets the postponement of a conference on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and considers that the cancellation of the conference has a negative impact on the non-proliferation regime. Mexico also considers that the failure to convene a conference has affected the credibility of the Non-Proliferation Treaty regime, to the detriment of trust between the Parties and of their commitments. Mexico hopes that an agreement in that regard can be reached in the new review cycle of the Treaty in 2020.

Mexico, both individually and together with other countries, will continue to support efforts to establish new nuclear-weapon-free zones, both at the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and in the First Committee of the General Assembly and within the International Atomic Energy Agency framework, and reiterates its offer to share its experience and lessons learned during the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Morocco

[Original: French]
[8 May 2018]

The Kingdom of Morocco believes that it is essential to convene without further delay an international conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, in implementation of the plan of action for the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East.

Morocco regrets the postponement of the 2012 conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, as well as the lack of consensus on a final document at the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,

which would have advanced the common goal of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

Morocco stresses the importance of accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the conclusion of comprehensive safeguards agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency by all States in the region of the Middle East, which would help to achieve a just and lasting peace to the benefit of all those countries.

Morocco congratulates the State of Palestine on its accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2015 and on its signing of a comprehensive safeguards agreement, and considers that accession to the Treaty is vital to the attainment of peace and the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

Morocco stresses the need for all parties concerned to take the practical and urgent steps required for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East and, pending the establishment of such a zone, to declare solemnly that they will refrain from producing, acquiring or possessing nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive devices and from permitting the stationing of nuclear weapons on their territory by any third party.

Morocco calls on the international community to give serious consideration, in a fair and equal manner, to the concerns related to the deployment of nuclear weapons in the Middle East.

Qatar

[Original: Arabic]
15 May 2018

- Qatar was among the first States to support the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East in accordance with the resolutions of the Review Conferences of 1995, 2000 and 2010.
- Ridding the Middle East region of nuclear weapons is a prerequisite for the promotion of international peace and security.
- It is important to remain committed to the terms of reference and resolutions adopted in that regard at all international forums, including the resolutions of the General Assembly and the outcomes of the review conferences.
- Qatar supports the efforts that were made to convene a conference in 2012 on the establishment of such a region under the aegis, supervision and responsibility of the Secretary-General and the representatives of the States that sponsored the 1995 Middle East resolution.

Russian Federation

[Original: Russian]
[15 May 2018]

As one of the sponsors of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, Russia has made efforts to resume the dialogue on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.

In order to move towards the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, the Russian delegation made an informal presentation, at a First Committee meeting during the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, on a possible solution for regional aspects of

security in the Middle East. At the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Parties committed to creating the conditions for adoption at the 2020 Review Conference of a decision to convene a conference on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The Russian proposals for the organization of the conference and its preparatory process (NPT/CONF.2020/PC.I/WP.31) could serve as a framework.

Syrian Arab Republic

[Original: Arabic]
[11 May 2018]

The Syrian Arab Republic emphasizes the fundamental role of the United Nations in establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East on the basis of the resolutions of the General Assembly, the Security Council, IAEA and the review conferences of the parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The Syrian Arab Republic affirms that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones around the world is an important step towards disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. It is not, however, an end in itself: it is a means towards the goals of achieving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, consolidating peace and security regionally and internationally, and preserving the credibility of the Treaty.

The Syrian Arab Republic firmly believes that the possession of nuclear weapons by any State or acquisition of those weapons by non-State actors or terrorist groups threatens international peace and security. It was one of the first States in the Middle East to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, in 1968. It has affirmed, in all international forums, its continuing commitment to its international commitments under the Treaty, which it considers the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime and an international reference. It underscores that article IV of the Treaty accords the States parties the inalienable right to acquire nuclear technology for use in various peaceful applications.

The Syrian Arab Republic recalls that, in April 2003, when it was a member of the Security Council, the Syrian Arab Republic submitted an initiative to rid the Middle East of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. Unfortunately, certain influential States on the Security Council took positions that blocked that initiative. In December 2003, the Syrian Arab Republic put that initiative forward again, with a Security Council draft resolution in blue. However, the United States of America threatened to veto the draft resolution in order to exempt Israel from the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

By acceding to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, the Syrian Arab Republic has demonstrated its commitment to the establishment of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction, in particular nuclear weapons, in the Middle East. It has given the lie to pretexts used by Israel to avoid the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

The Syrian Arab Republic stresses that it is gravely concerned by the obstacles placed by Israel in the way of making the Middle East a zone free of nuclear weapons. Israel continues to refuse to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear State and to place all its nuclear activities under the supervision of IAEA, in contravention of all relevant internationally recognized resolutions of the Security Council, in particular Security Council resolution 487 (1981), and resolutions of the General Assembly, IAEA and the review conferences of the parties to the Treaty.

The Syrian Arab Republic stresses that the only way to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and rein in the risks of the proliferation of nuclear weapons is for Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear State and place all its nuclear activities and facilities under an IAEA comprehensive safeguards regime.

In that connection, the Syrian Arab Republic is concerned at the lack of progress towards the implementation of the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty, as well as the action plan on the Middle East adopted at the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty.

The Syrian Arab Republic affirms the need to uphold the statement in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty. That Document recognized that the 1995 Middle East resolution remains valid until its goals and objectives are achieved, and that it is an essential element of the outcome of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference.

The Syrian Arab Republic recalls that the resolution to extend the Treaty indefinitely, which was adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference, would not have been possible had it not been for the understanding reached at that time whereby the nuclear-weapon States committed to a review of the concerns of many States parties in the Middle East region, particularly the need to pressure Israel to accede to the Treaty, unconditionally place all its installations under comprehensive safeguards without further delay and eliminate all its military nuclear capabilities, which are not subject to international supervision, in order to pave the way for a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

The Syrian Arab Republic regrets the failure in 2012 to convene an international conference as envisioned by the Final Document of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. That 2012 conference was supposed to have been attended by all the States in the Middle East with a view to establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. The Syrian Arab Republic likewise rejects all the pretexts put forward at that time by the United States, in its capacity as a depositary State for the Treaty and one of the sponsors of the 2012 conference, to explain the failure to convene that conference. The Syrian Arab Republic stresses yet again that the Security Council has a responsibility, in accordance with Security Council resolution 487 (1981), to put pressure on Israel with a view to establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East, particularly since the depositary States for the Treaty are permanent members of the Security Council, and in order to compel Israel to accede to the Treaty, abandon all its nuclear arsenals and their means of delivery, and place all its nuclear activities under an IAEA comprehensive safeguards agreement.

The Syrian Arab Republic stresses the obligation of nuclear-weapon States under article I of the Treaty to undertake not to transfer to Israel any nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, or any direct or indirect control of weapons or such devices, and not to assist, encourage or induce Israel in any way whatsoever to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, or gain control over such weapons or explosive devices.

The Syrian Arab Republic stresses that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East should in no way be linked to the peace process in the region. The Syrian Arab Republic also reiterates that any identification of the countries in the Middle East region for this purpose in no way constitutes a definition of the region.

The Syrian Arab Republic again reiterates its willingness to cooperate with the Secretary-General for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

Turkey

[Original: English]
[14 May 2018]

Turkey reaffirms its strong commitment to arms control and disarmament, as well as the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. Turkey's policy excludes the production, possession, use, development and transfer of weapons of mass destruction. Turkey actively participates in international efforts in this field and supports the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones wherever feasible and on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among States of the regions concerned. Nuclear-weapon-free-zones, deriving from article VII of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, are effective regional confidence-building measures, which in turn strengthen the global non-proliferation and disarmament regime and the implementation of the Treaty.

In line with this understanding, at the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, Turkey joined in sponsoring resolution 72/22, entitled "African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty", and joined the consensus on decision 72/515, entitled "Treaty on the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty)". Turkey also joined in sponsoring resolution 72/50, entitled "United action with renewed determination towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons".

As a neighbouring country to the region, assuring peace, security and stability in the Middle East is of crucial importance for Turkey. In this regard, Turkey has always been a firm proponent of the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. The establishment of such a zone would be in accordance with the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly and the guidelines adopted by the Disarmament Commission in 1999. With this understanding, Turkey fully endorsed the resolution adopted at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons with a view to establishing such a zone. Turkey is committed to the resolution adopted by the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which also decided on the convening of an international conference in 2012 to this end. Turkey regrets the fact that the goal of convening this conference could not be realized. Furthermore, it is also regrettable that the 2015 Review Conference ended without an outcome.

On this occasion, Turkey would like to reaffirm the vital importance of the Treaty as the main international legal framework in this field. This undeniable reality brings us to the conclusion that the Treaty should be strengthened and universalized. The accession to the Treaty of States that have not yet done so will be a significant step in this direction. This would have special meaning considering that there is only one State in the Middle East region that is not a party to the Treaty.

Turkey also calls upon States that have not yet done so to accede to and abide by the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and to conclude a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement, the Additional Protocol and, as applicable, a modified Small Quantities Protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Turkey believes that accession to and implementation of these agreements would facilitate the path towards the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, including in the

Middle East. With this understanding in mind, Turkey voted in favour of General Assembly resolution 72/43, entitled "Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction", and joined in sponsoring resolution 72/70, entitled "Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty".

The establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems would contribute to easing tensions and building confidence, promote the peace process, strengthen global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament norms and consolidate international efforts towards peace and security, taking into account the unique character of such a zone, which goes beyond one category of weapons. Turkey firmly believes that the process for the establishment of such a zone should be accelerated, as delaying it indefinitely would undermine the credibility of the international non-proliferation regime. Turkey hopes that the challenge posed by this issue can be overcome in the forthcoming period. For this, all stakeholders concerned need to be emboldened to adopt constructive stances.

Turkey continues to support efforts aimed at establishing a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. Most recently, at the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, Turkey joined the consensus on resolution 72/24, entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East". In addition, Turkey voted in favour of resolution 72/67, entitled "The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East". Turkey promotes the idea of the zone in other international forums as well. Within the framework of IAEA, Turkey voted in favour of resolution GC(61)/RES/14, entitled "Application of IAEA safeguards in the Middle East", at the sixty-first regular session of the General Conference, held from 18 to 22 September 2017. Turkey delivered statements in support of the establishment of such a zone at the first and second sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference, held in 2017 and 2018, respectively.

Turkey is a member of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative. The Initiative submitted a working paper (NPT/CONF.2015/PC.III/WP.7) regarding the establishment of a weapons-of-mass-destruction-free zone in the Middle East to the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference at its third session, held from 28 April to 9 May 2014.

Turkey invites all parties to contribute to progress towards the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and looks forward to the continued consultations of the Secretary-General with the States of the region and other States concerned towards that goal. Turkey remains committed to supporting these efforts.

Turkey is firmly committed to supporting the Middle East peace process, which it sees as a key to achieving regional stability and to promoting conducive conditions for a zone free of weapons of mass destruction.

Turkey also includes this topic on the agenda during bilateral talks, as and where appropriate.

Last but not least, Turkey will continue its efforts to support the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons, as well as other weapons of mass destruction. Given the fragile security environment, particularly in the Middle East, the international community needs the enhanced cooperation and active involvement of all parties with a view to bringing the Non-Proliferation Treaty resolution to life.

Ukraine

[Original: English]
[15 May 2018]

Ukraine has been party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons since 1994 as a non-nuclear State. During its 24 years of membership, Ukraine has been fulfilling its obligations in accordance with the provisions of this international legal instrument. Furthermore, Ukraine keeps undertaking and efficiently implementing additional obligations in the framework of nuclear security summits. In particular, Ukraine refused to use highly enriched uranium and removed all of its stocks from its territory. In the course of the Washington Nuclear Security Summit, held in March and April 2016, Ukraine, at the highest political level, reconfirmed its commitment to the principles of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons as a leading State in this process.

Ukraine supports the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East. This position was confirmed by Ukraine at a high political level at the 2015 Review Conference. We consider convening a conference on this issue to be an important task; its successful implementation would increase the level of regional and international security and strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime.

IV. Reply received from the European Union

[Original: English]
[15 May 2018]

The European Union reaffirms its strong commitment to the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East, as set out in the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. This was reconfirmed in the 1995 Barcelona Declaration, in which the European Union and its member States, together with all the countries from the Middle East and North African region, committed themselves to the pursuit of "a mutually and effectively verifiable Middle East Zone free of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological, and their delivery systems". The European Union considers the 1995 resolution valid until its goals and objectives are achieved, in line with the action plan of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The European Union maintains the view that dialogue and building confidence among stakeholders is the only sustainable way to agree on arrangements for a meaningful conference, to be attended by all States of the Middle East, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by them, as decided by the 2010 Review Conference.

The European Union confirms its readiness to assist the process leading to the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems in the Middle East, as it has done in the past by facilitating dialogue among States of the region. The European Union remains prepared to help in bringing the process forward by organizing seminars and meetings, as was done in 2011 and in 2012, respectively. Its Principal Adviser and Special Envoy for Non-Proliferation and Disarmament continues to be at the disposal of the process and is ready to meet and engage with all States in the region to explore how a fresh start can be made to the process.

The European Union also confirms its readiness to continue to assist the Middle East region through the European Union Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Risk Mitigation Centres of Excellence Initiative, which was launched in

response to the need to strengthen the institutional capacity of countries outside the European Union to mitigate chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear risks. The centres of excellence established in Jordan, Algeria, Morocco and the United Arab Emirates all contribute to enhanced capacity-building in the region.

The European Union continues to call upon all States in the region that have not yet done so to accede to and abide by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and to conclude a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement, the Additional Protocol and, as applicable, a modified Small Quantities Protocol with the International Atomic Energy Agency. Also, subscribing to the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation could contribute to regional confidence-building, which is necessary for progress towards a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.